

AIDS and HIV infection have major resource implications. The emphasis of most published research investigating this to date has been on cost studies, particularly analysis of cost per case. There is an absence of studies investigating the cost utility or cost effectiveness of different strategies for providing care or of alternative modes of care. As this volume of papers discusses, economic evaluation must include a comparison of alternatives and an assessment of the effectiveness of treatments or programmes. It is clear from a worldwide literature review and a European project survey included in the book that there is a dearth of such studies. It is a pity that the studies in the book confirm this view with insufficient scientific evidence to support different models for caring for AIDS patients.

The basis of this book are the papers given at a conference on behalf of the Concerted Action Committee (COMEC) on Health Services Research in 1989. The papers explore the European activities concerned with the economic aspects of AIDS. A substantial portion deals with cost studies from various European countries. Despite the large number of contributions there seemed to be very little variety in the nature of the studies and in the methodologies used. There were inadequate attempts to relate costs to benefits as a basis for any economic evaluation. It is not that cost studies are unimportant but that cost studies are estimates of the costs of what has been done with no questioning of whether what has been done is needed. Additionally the emphasis tends to be on hospital costs, with little on the costs of the voluntary sector.

The discussions of the social aspects of the disease indicate that even in a global problem such as AIDS our approach must be country specific. It is argued that economic evaluations need to address broader questions such as cost-effective methods of regulating labour markets so that the income of infected people is not reduced by discrimination. I would have liked to have seen more discussion on such vital issues, on the practical aspects of performing such analysis and suggestions for methodologies for good economic evaluations.

An interesting chapter by an actuary from the UK describes a model developed for permanent health insurance. He suggests that this may

show a possible approach which can be used to estimate the requirements for medical care for those infected with HIV or suffering from AIDS. It was presented inevitably only from the point of view of the insurance companies. Unfortunately nothing is discussed about the insurance needs of AIDS patients and how they are being met by the insurance industry.

There are useful chapters on the use of sentinel systems in the evaluation of the impact of the disease and on the use of scenarios for planning.

Overall this is a valuable collection of papers for anyone interested in AIDS research and indeed for anyone studying health economics. However, the narrowness of the issues discussed was rather disappointing.

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Sexually Transmitted Diseases—Colour Aids. By A McMillan and G R Scott. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. (Pp 106 £7.95). ISBN 0-443-04052-4.

Pictorial text-books (if that is not a contradiction in terms) pose some special problems for their authors. The main one is balancing pictures and text, resisting the temptation to write a lot on a photogenic subject, or including irrelevant photographs on an abstract one. Other pitfalls arise from picture selection. Anyone who lectures is familiar with the biasing effect of clinical slides: the tendency to photograph extreme, rather than representative, lesions, and to slant lectures towards subjects for which good clinical slides are available.

Doctors McMillan and Scott have in the main kept the balance; for example, hepatitis B, a difficult subject to represent pictorially, is illustrated by a diagram of antigen and antibody levels in an acute attack. They have been less successful, however, in avoiding "lecture slide bias". Most of the photographs are of gross disease, many of them are familiar and some, such as that of syphilitic snuffles, poor quality—they do apologise for that one, but surely it should be possible to get new ones from somewhere? The pictures of non-STD lesions are better and there are some nice ones of oral lesions in HIV disease, although the inclusion of oral candida in association

with a seroconversion illness seems an odd choice.

The text is concise and up-to-date and I liked the use of the term "prepatent period" to avoid the ambiguities of defining incubation. I was worried by unexplained references to "pus cells" since I assume the book is aimed at medical students who should, presumably, be using a more scientific name. I also noticed some ideosyncrasies (presumably reflecting particular clinic practices in Edinburgh) and a degree of parochialism.

Despite these criticisms, a jaded medical student may find this little book sufficient for his needs: there is just enough information which, coupled with the pictures, makes for relatively painless learning; and this may mean that it will be read.

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Adult and Pediatric Urology. Edited by J Y Gillenwater, J T Grayhack, S S Howards, J W Duckett. 2nd edition. St Louis, Mosby Year Book. (Pp 2366, £150.) 1991. ISBN 0-8151-3549-9.

This is a two volume, 2366 page text-book now in its second edition after only 4 years, which is a reflection of its popularity and the speed of progress in this branch of medicine. Throughout, the references are right up-to-date and the publishers should be congratulated on putting this enormous text on our shelves so quickly.

There is much to interest the genitourinary physician. For instance, a 62 page chapter with over 500 references is ready to update the reader in all aspects of urinary tract infection. Bacterial adherence, natural defence mechanisms and natural history are all covered in great detail, as are the perennial problems of the frequency-dysuria syndrome and prostatitis. The more specific theme of prostatitis is taken up again in a later chapter and much order is achieved in redefining Stamey's reference to the real or imagined spectrum of diseases encompassed by the term prostatitis as a "wastebasket of clinical ignorance". It is an excellent chapter, well founded on scientific and clinical grounds.

A chapter on male infertility is "state of the art" and enhanced by clinical algorithms for investigation